



Unit .23

Session .05

Jesus Teaches About the Good Shepherd

Scripture



John 10:7-18

7 Jesus said again, “Truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. **8** All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep didn’t listen to them. **9** I am the gate. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture. **10** A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance. **11** “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. **12** The hired hand, since he is not the shepherd and doesn’t own the sheep, leaves them and runs away when he sees a wolf coming. The wolf then snatches and scatters them. **13** This happens because

he is a hired hand and doesn’t care about the sheep. **14** “I am the good shepherd. I know my own, and my own know me, **15** just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father. I lay down my life for the sheep. **16** But I have other sheep that are not from this sheep pen; I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. Then there will be one flock, one shepherd. **17** This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life so that I may take it up again. **18** No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have the right to lay it down, and I have the right to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

Intro Options



Main Point:
**Jesus' love and
compassion leads
to a fulfilled life.**

Option 1

Your students should pretend they run an advice column (or an advice channel on YouTube or Instagram). Someone has written in to your group to ask how to show someone that you care for that person.

Students should now prepare some kind of answer: they could make a skit giving an example of how to show care; they could make drawings or posters showing how to care; they could make a step-by-step how-to guide to suggest how to show someone you care about him or her; they could give verbal advice as though they were talking in a YouTube video. Give them some time to prepare their answers and then to share them.

What patterns do they see across their answers? How many of their answers involve some kind of sacrifice? It's often the case that showing our care involves sacrifice. In today's lesson, Jesus will show that He is the Good Shepherd because He makes the ultimate sacrifice for His sheep to show them His ultimate care for them.

Option 2

A major conglomerate corporation has been running a media campaign for several weeks for an unknown product or service that they are about to launch and reveal. Much mystery has surrounded whatever this product or service will be; the company has been really tight-lipped about it, aside from this single tagline: "The Gateway to the Good Life." This line has been plastered on every sign, radio, billboard, commercial, etc.

Your students should pretend they are the executives for this international, gigantic corporation. As individuals or small groups, they should propose what they think this "Gateway to the Good Life" is or should be. They should include diagrams or drawings, if possible, of either the product or people using it. Give them time to consider what they will present, then let them do so.

What did they come up with? A new, gated community? A time-scheduling service? Some great product? A collection of the world's greatest films and video games? Our answers probably show both what we think the good life is and how we think we should get it.

Ask them what they would think if Jesus were "the Gateway to the Good Life." How would He be so? As we'll see in the lesson today, Jesus presents Himself as exactly that: the gate through which His sheep enter green pastures.

*Note: after the lesson, you can also have students make posters, commercials, or other propaganda for your church "advertising" Jesus as "The Gateway to the Good Life." How could Christians honestly and accurately present Jesus in this way to the world?

TEACHING PLAN

Previously, the Pharisees had kicked a man out of the synagogue because he had the nerve to say Jesus healed him of his blindness (John 9:28-34). So Jesus responded by describing the Pharisees as “thieves and robbers” who only had harm in mind for the flock of God.

Read John 10:7-10.



The Pharisees led people away from a true relationship with God by their additional rules and misunderstandings of the law, but Jesus offered Himself as the way into eternal life and community with the Father and His sheep—He is the gate. If you want to enter into the flock of God and into communion with the Father, you have to go in by way of Jesus (John 14:6).

In an increasingly pluralistic society, to say there is only one way to God—only one way to be saved—is an unpopular opinion. With so many ideas, religions, and philosophies out there, it has become unacceptable in our culture to claim only one path to God. Modern religions today say do certain things, obey these rules, and you are “in.” Irreligion says everyone is already “in” and truth is relative. But the gate is not a set of teachings to follow. The gate is a person. Jesus declared plainly that He is the only way to be saved from God’s coming judgment.

▪ What are some characteristics of those “thieves and robbers” that threaten the church today?

Jesus said He came to provide abundant life for His sheep. Depending on the person, abundant life might sound like having extra money, getting straight A’s, or just being happy while accomplishing something good in the world. These are desirable aspects of life, but Jesus meant so much more than earthly blessings and temporary emotions.

As the gate, Jesus grants us safety from all the enemies that would destroy us for eternity in hell: sin, shame, and death. We are saved when we enter God’s presence by Christ. And as His sheep, Jesus watches over the dangers we face outside the fold, as well as provides for us while on the inside.

To “come in and go out and find pasture” (v. 9) means that we are always going through Jesus and we never move past Him. We have abundant life because we get Him! Of course, if we seem to “find” life anywhere else other than in Christ, then that thing will ultimately steal our joy and destroy our lives (v.10). The “thief” could come even in the form of good things—family, friends, good grades—if they turn us away from Christ. Nothing can bear the burden of our desire for joy; only Jesus can. He doesn’t promise a pain-free life, but the pain can’t steal the abundance of our life of faith because it is secure in the person and work of Christ. We aren’t promised an easy life, but we are promised a full life.

▪ What are some good things that have the potential to make you stray from following Jesus?

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
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John 10

7-10. “Threefold repetition of parallel expressions such as ‘steal and kill and destroy’ (whether positive or negative) is a characteristic device denoting emphasis in biblical literature. Here, three negative verbs are stacked to underscore the devastating effect of these usurpers on God’s people. Such triads are attributed to Jesus (Matt. 7:7; John 14:6) and are used by Paul (1 Thess. 1:3; 5:23). The word for “kill” (thyō [only here in John]) is not the common term and may connote the abuse of the sacrificial system by the priestly authorities. Jesus came for his ‘sheep’ to have life, and to have it abundantly. ‘Have life’ means ‘to have eternal life,’ that is, ‘to be saved’ (see 10:9). Importantly, however, this does not merely entail participation in the age to come (as was the general view among Jews); according to John, Jesus gives a full life already in the here and now (which does not imply the absence of persecution [cf. 15:18-25]). In the OT, it is especially the prophet Ezekiel who envisions pasture and abundant life for God’s people (cf. 34:12-15, 25-31). As the good shepherd, Jesus gives his sheep not merely enough but more than plenty.”¹

11. In contrast to the hired hand, Jesus made this noble claim: He was willing to die for His sheep because they’re His and He loves them. We love statements that boldly declare the extent to which someone would go to protect a loved one. But of course, these were more than mere words with Jesus—He followed through on His claim for our salvation.

A good shepherd doesn’t lay down his life simply as an example for his sheep. He sacrifices his life to ensure the safety of his sheep. Jesus—the Good Shepherd—didn’t just give us an example of what we ought to do; He actually saved us. To save us from the wolves of sin and death and false teachers, Jesus willingly laid down His life so that we might have life. His sacrificial death accomplished several things:

- It demonstrated God’s love for us, His enemies (Rom. 5:6-8).
- It was the atoning sacrifice for our sins (1 John 4:10).
- It reconciled us to God (1 Pet. 3:18).
- It means we no longer have to fear death (Heb. 2:14-15).

99 Essential Doctrines (p. 72, DDG)

Christ as Propitiation

Because of God’s righteousness and holiness, humanity’s sins must be atoned for in order for people to be reconciled to God. As the propitiation for sins, Christ’s death is the appeasement or satisfaction of God’s wrath against sin. Christ’s propitiation for our sins demonstrates both God’s great love toward sinners (1 John 4:10) as well as the necessary payment that results from the penalty of sins (Rom. 3:26).

TEACHING PLAN

Read John 10:11-13.



In these verses, Jesus switched His metaphor from a gate to a shepherd who watches over his sheep, and He likened the religious leaders of the day to hired hands and Himself to the good shepherd. For the hired hand, watching sheep was just a job, a paycheck to earn. But what would happen when the hired hand saw a wolf creeping toward the sheep pen? He would run, choosing his own safety over the lives of the sheep.

The shepherd, on the other hand, had a vested interest in the sheep because they actually belonged to him. In contrast to the hired hand, the good shepherd doesn't run away from danger but willingly steps in front of danger to protect his sheep.

Here, Jesus is declaring how much He loves and cares for His sheep because they belong to Him. This says less about the sheep and more about the Shepherd and His character. The hired hand cares more about his own safety and comfort over the sheep. The Good Shepherd is willing to sacrifice his own safety and comfort in order to protect the sheep. Like the sheep in the metaphor, it's not because we're a glamorous bunch. We who belong to Jesus haven't earned His love and protection. Jesus loves, protects, and cares for us because we're His.

- **How should the fact that believers are loved by a faithful and protective Shepherd influence the way we think about our relationship with God?**
- **How should it influence the way we think about and treat others?**

Read John 10:14-18.



Shepherds and sheep know each other pretty well. The sheep know the voice of their caretaker and know to head toward that voice when the shepherd calls. The shepherd is the source of food, water, and safety, so the sheep learn to follow his voice alone and not to follow strange voices. Back then, the shepherd spent most of his day with the sheep, and he would learn each sheep by heart. The shepherd could walk into a crowd of mixed sheep and pick out his own.

When Jesus said that He knew His sheep and His sheep knew Him, that wouldn't have been a surprising metaphor. But what was surprising was that Jesus likened His relationship with His sheep to the way He knows the Father and the Father knows Him.

The Father and the Son know each other intimately because they are one (John 1:1). They are one and have been one, along with the Holy Spirit, for all of eternity. So close is this relationship that seeing the Son is seeing the Father (John 14:9-10). It is this deep, intimate knowing that Jesus relates to the way He knows us and we know Him. Jesus doesn't just know things about us; He knows us at the deepest level, including our weaknesses and failures and sin patterns, and still He loved us enough to lay down His life.

- **As the Good Shepherd, what is Jesus calling you away from during this time? What is He calling you to?**

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
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John 10

12. “Who is this wolf (v 12)? At one level, the wolf is anyone or anything who is trying to kill the sheep. You define wolves not by how big their teeth are (this is not Little Red Riding Hood), but by what they use their teeth for. A wolf, by definition, tries to devour the sheep. But in this immediate context, Jesus probably has specific people in mind too. At this point in the narrative, if anyone is a wolf, it is the Pharisees. Shocking, isn't it? The religious leaders are not praying for their people; they are preying on them. They are not dying on behalf of their people; their people are dying because of them.”²

Activity

Your church acknowledges that in our current culture, relatively few people know much about shepherding. In order to try to help people grasp the main point of today's lesson, the pastor wants to offer illustrations in an “X is like Y” format, and he's asking your students to help make them.

Break students into pairs (or they may work individually); assign each pair one of the points below (Jesus is the gate leading to abundant life; Jesus is the Good Shepherd laying down His life for the sheep; Jesus is the good shepherd who knows His sheep). They should then create a visual aid illustrating each point. They might start like this:

Jesus' being the gate to abundant life is like...

Jesus' being the good shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep is like...

Jesus' being the good shepherd who knows His sheep is like...

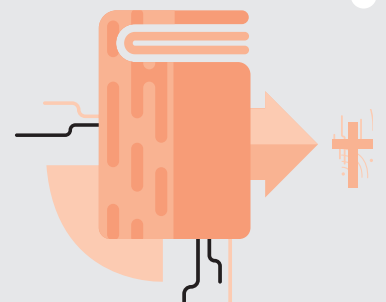
Their illustrations should finish the sentence. For instance, they might draw Jesus knowing His sheep as being like a child's mother being able to pick her out instantly in a large crowd, or like someone giving his friend exactly the gift he wanted.

Let them make their drawings. Before they share the drawings, ask them to consider a caveat: the Bible's imagery is more important than any imagery of our own. So ask them also to explain how the gate/good shepherd imagery is even more powerful, in its context, than whatever illustration your students made. Then let them present their drawings and share their caveats.

(p. 74, DDG)

Christ Connection

Jesus is the Good Shepherd, sent by the Father, to lay down His life for the sheep so that they might have life. Because of Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection from the grave, we have abundant life in Him and through Him.





THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Jesus' love and compassion leads to a fulfilled life.

JESUS CONNECTION



Jesus is the Good Shepherd, sent by the Father to lay down His life for the sheep so that they might have life. Because of Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection from the grave, we have abundant life in Him and through Him.



LIFEWISE QUALITY

CONFIDENCE – Trusting in God's goodness and character no matter what.



HEAD

In what ways does the Good Shepherd care for His sheep? How do His sheep respond?

Whom do the thief and wolf in the story represent? What is their plan for the sheep?



HEART

Jesus died on the cross, was raised to life and sent the Holy Spirit so give us the power to live a good and satisfying life for Jesus. What things in your life (good or bad) do you need to get rid of in order to help you do this?

When sin threatened to separate us from God forever, Jesus laid down His life to save us. How does the fact that you are cared for by such a faithful and protective Shepherd help you to have confidence every day?



HANDS

The Shepherd spends so much time with the sheep that they always recognize His voice. Because of this close relationship, the sheep confidently listen to and follow wherever the Shepherd leads. The more time we spend with God—reading and learning about His Word, talking to Him and worshiping Him—the more we will be able to discern His call and move forward with confidence, too. Read the suggestions below and choose to do one every day (ideas can be repeated) for the next week:

- ◆ Read a chapter in the book of Mark
- ◆ Play a Christian worship song on your device and think about what it means. (If you don't know of any artists, try "CityAlight worship songs")
- ◆ Use the acronym P.R.A.Y. to talk with God
 - ◇ P — Praise God for who He is
 - ◇ R — Repent of your sins (confess your sin, turn from it in your mind and heart)
 - ◇ A — Ask for God's help
 - ◇ Y — Yield (hand over) control of your life and plans to God
- ◆ Draw or doodle the story of the Good Shepherd
- ◆ Go to a church youth group with a friend or family member